Cyber Security Month: Lock Out Internet Crime

Release Date: October 24, 2011   **Contact:** Ashley Huibregtse, 608-224-5002
Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – We lock our homes, cars and businesses each day to protect ourselves against theft, but many people forget to use these same precautions when online. With internet crime on the rise, take time to understand the risks and learn how to spot potential problems.

"Leaving your internet connection on and unprotected is just like leaving your front door wide open," said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator of the Bureau of Trade and Consumer Protection. "Hackers and scammers enter through that open door to steal your personal information, spy on your internet surfing or use your computer to send spam to other computers without your knowledge."

Governor Scott Walker issued an Official Proclamation proclaiming October 2011 as Cyber Security Awareness Month. In the proclamation, the Governor recognizes the importance of technology in our daily lives and how we each must do our part to ensure our cyber security.

According to the FBI, 25-percent of the internet crime reported in Wisconsin last year involved identity theft, with a median loss per complaint of $1,700. Internet scammers "phish" for your Social Security number, bank account information or credit card number by sending e-mails posing as a person, business or organization you know.

"Criminal hackers are increasingly turning to social-media tools, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, to trick people into downloading malicious code or revealing passwords," said Chalmers. "These criminals are so sophisticated that identity theft victims often don't realize they have been compromised until it's too late."

The Bureau of Consumer Protection offers these four tips to protect yourself against a cyber attack:

- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Look for software that updates automatically on a daily basis.

- Use a firewall to protect your computer, especially if you have a broadband connection.

- Be cautious when opening attachments and downloading files from e-mails you receive, even if it looks like it is from a friend or co-worker, unless you are expecting it and know what it is.

- Download free software only from sites you know and trust. It may look like a great deal, but it probably contains malicious software.

For more consumer information or to file a consumer complaint if you believe you may have been the victim of a cyber crime, visit the Bureau of Consumer Protection's website at datcp.wisconsin.gov; send an email to datcphotline@wisconsin.gov; or call toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

###